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A PUBLICATION FROM THE BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION

Journal

January 1999[Click here for past Journals.](#)

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Rate case workshops begin this month

BPA begins a series of pre-rate case technical workshops this month to share the agency's analyses for the 1999 BPA power rate case initial proposal. The technical workshops will cover topics ranging from sales and inventory forecasts to incorporating new product design into computer modeling. BPA is seeking constructive review of its efforts to date, to reach as much agreement as possible before the rate hearings begin. All technical workshops will be held in Portland. The workshops are for persons who have a relatively high level of technical knowledge about BPA's ratesetting, although the workshops are open to anyone.

People who do not wish to delve quite so deeply into the details of ratesetting will have opportunities to review and comment on BPA's proposal after it is published. BPA will sponsor two rate case educational meetings for those not familiar with rate cases. BPA staff will describe the rate process and subjects covered in the rate case, including fish and wildlife funding. These meetings will help prepare people to participate in the public hearings on the initial proposal that will be held throughout the region in late spring.

Dates and times of the educational meetings, technical workshops and public hearings on the 1999 rate case will be posted on the [rate case website](#).

The initial proposal will be published in the spring of 1999, beginning a rate case that will set power rates for the five-year period starting Oct. 1, 2001.

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BPA will accept your comments on contract provisions

As reported in last month's *Journal*, BPA has decided to issue three key contract provisions for public review. They include:

1. cost recovery,
2. uncontrollable forces and
3. governing law and dispute resolution.

Your comments will help BPA craft language that balances regional concerns. BPA will accept comments through Feb. 8 and will make decisions on final language before the start of Subscription, currently scheduled for later in February. Send your comments on the contract provisions to: BPA, P.O. Box 12999, Portland, OR 97212 or fax them to (503) 230-4019. The contract provisions will be available on the Internet on Jan. 7 at the following address: <http://www.bpa.gov/power/subscription>. The contract provisions are also available by calling BPA's Public Information Center at 1-800-622-4519.

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Regional scientists release fish report

A group of regional scientists has released its final report for fiscal year 1998 on the Plan for Analyzing and Testing Hypotheses, or PATH. The report looked at four major alternatives for operation of the hydro system on Snake River spring/summer chinook, fall chinook, steelhead and sockeye. The alternatives the report examined include current mitigation measures, maximum fish transportation (barging), in-river migration without barging or drawdown, drawdown of four Snake River dams to natural river and drawdown of John Day and Snake River dams to natural river.

The analyses use models to predict the future population levels of salmon for each of the alternative actions using a range of alternative hypotheses regarding salmon survival. The projected performance of the actions is evaluated relative to the [National Marine Fisheries Service's](#) 24- and 100-year survival standards and its 48-year recovery standard.

The modeling results predict that, on average (over the range of hypotheses tested), there is little difference between drawdown alternatives and other options in their ability to meet the 24- and 100-year survival standards but that drawdown alternatives are more likely to meet the 48-year recovery standard. The report found little difference, on average, in results for the current measures and for maximum transportation. The in-river migration alternative with improved passage actions at dams had a wide range of results, but tended to have lower performance than the transportation alternative.

PATH has focused primarily on hydro operations and has performed only limited evaluations of additional actions involving changes in hatchery practices, habitat restoration or fish harvests. Some initial sensitivity analyses for harvest and habitat actions for spring and summer chinook show that actions in these other non-hydro areas can increase the probability of meeting National Marine Fisheries Service's recovery standards under current hydro mitigation measures.

There are very high levels of uncertainty in the modeling results as a result of limited data. PATH is currently planning to perform additional sensitivity analyses to address some of these uncertainties and the potential effects of additional actions in habitat, harvest and hatchery management. In addition, PATH plans on identifying and evaluating experimental management actions that may achieve NMFS recovery standards and maximize learning to reduce the uncertainty in key pieces of information.

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BPA hosts New Energy Technologies Symposium

BPA will host a New Energy Technologies Symposium on March 18 and 19 at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Ore. This event, open to the public, follows a well-received staff seminar on the subject in October. The March meeting will have a more topical focus in that it will address new sources of electricity based on efficiencies or renewables that will have a direct, immediate impact on electric power production and transmission. The seminar will explore policies that may stimulate opportunity — and that may affect BPA's role as a Northwest energy provider. It also will look at sources for funding. Utilities, industries, businesses and associations will be invited. Look for a registration form in the mail later in January. Call Sharon Blair (503) 230-4175 or Cheri Larson (503) 230-3325 with any questions.

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WSCC sanctions reliability

At their annual meeting in early December, the [Western Systems Coordinating Council](#) members set the stage for what could be a first — mandatory reliability standards with sanctions. Members overwhelmingly approved a resolution that calls for WSCC to file a petition for a declaratory order with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The council also will seek a business review letter from the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice. If the FERC order and the Department of Justice business review letter are acceptable, members will be asked to voluntarily sign contracts agreeing to comply with four specified reliability criteria, with sanctions for failure to comply. The WSCC Reliability Management System is designed to improve transmission system reliability in a restructured marketplace. WSCC has been developing the mandatory reliability program since 1997. The full program contains 18 high-ranking mandatory compliance standards. The initial phase will implement

the first four standards. FERC approval is needed to implement the system. WSCC is a voluntary organization of utilities in 13 western states. It has 86 voting members.

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New fish-tagging equipment will identify fish while reducing stress

New fish-tagging equipment, partially developed and funded by BPA, can mark about 50,000 smolts a day without harming the fish. The equipment, tested by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, clips a young salmon's adipose fin and inserts a coded wire tag and clip in about two seconds. While older fish-marking techniques required human handling and anaesthetizing the fish, this technique does not, thus reducing stress. It will now be possible to mark and tag whole runs of hatchery fish, making it easier for anglers, fish and wildlife agencies and others to distinguish between hatchery and wild fish. This will help agencies protect wild fish while providing fishing opportunities. The new machine was developed in partnership with [Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) and [Northwest Marine Technology](#). BPA contributed \$1.3 million (about 65 percent of the total cost) to the project under the Northwest Power Planning Council's Fish and Wildlife Program. The fish marking machine is expected to come into wide use throughout the Northwest and in California.

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What can the Northwest region expect from La Niña?

The region's hydro system may fare well in the current La Niña if history is any indicator. The Columbia River Basin historically has seen some of its record water conditions during La Niña years. But it's hard to predict what La Niñas will bring. La Niñas are characterized by their variability. Cold and snowy conditions may be followed by a "pineapple express." That creates a situation such as occurred in February 1996 when snow accumulations at low and mid elevations melted suddenly, rains came down and rivers overflowed.

According to the Multivariate El Niño Southern Oscillation Index (MEI), which is used to measure the strength of La Niñas and El Niños, conditions in the equatorial Pacific are showing the presence of La Niña conditions. The MEI is a compilation of real-time data collected in the equatorial Pacific on sea-level pressure, surface winds and several other key variables. Zero is the baseline MEI (or normal conditions, if there is such a thing). MEIs above +1 portend El Niños. As the MEI drops below zero, the weather patterns give way to La Niña conditions.

The recent drop of the MEI into La Niña conditions was just as unprecedented in its size as the rise towards El Niño conditions a year ago. The current MEI (minus 1.04) is not as strong as the last seven strongest La Niñas at this point, but it still has the potential to be at least a moderate, if not a strong, event this year. La Niña events tend to bring wetter conditions and abundant mountain snow to the Columbia Basin. On average, temperatures are cooler during a La Niña event, but there tend to be more dramatic swings back and forth from mild temperatures to cold temperatures. Cold snaps also tend to be more frequent during La Niñas and occur slightly later in the winter.

The appearance of a La Niña event again is welcome after a period of so many El Niños. The last 23 years have generally been dominated by El Niño events. In fact, many meteorologists and climatologists speculate that the long-term trend may be towards wetter years. The region may be coming out of a dry cycle that spanned the last 18-20 years and entering a wet cycle. Good news for the hydro system.

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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Status Reports

Big Eddy-Ostrander Vegetation Management EA.

Ore. — To control vegetation on two segments of the 500- kV transmission line right-of-way. One segment is from Lolo Pass to near Parkdale. The other segment is east of Parkdale. An EA is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Columbia Wind Farm #1.

Wash. — The final EIS (#2682) is available. Call to receive a copy.

Fourmile Hill Geothermal Development Project EIS (Calpine).

No. Calif. — A geothermal power plant and new transmission line have been proposed on Forest Service land in the Klamath and Modoc forests. BLM has the lead. BPA is a cooperating agency. A final EIS and summary are available. Call to receive a copy.

Johnson Creek Artificial Propagation Enhancement.

Idaho — Development of a native chinook salmon broodstock for rearing of acclimated smolts to preserve and recover the population. An EA is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Mid-Columbia Coho Restoration Feasibility Project.

Wash.— A project to implement various studies and research projects on the feasibility of restoring coho salmon to the mid-Columbia tributaries. The Yakama Indian Nation and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are cooperating agencies. An EA is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Northwest Regional Power Facility.

Wash. — To construct a combustion turbine near Creston. The final EIS (#2887) and a Supplement Analysis are available. Call to receive a copy.

Reedsport-Fairview Transmission Project.

Ore. — To improve reliability and limit maintenance costs on a segment of Reedsport-Fairview No. 1, a 115-kV transmission line. Would either replace a segment of the line with a shorter line in a new location or rebuild the segment where it is now. An EA is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Select Area Fisheries Evaluation.

Ore. and Wash. — Placement of net pens in Clifton Channel, Deep River and Steamboat Slough. A revised FONSI is available. Call to receive a copy.

South Oregon Coast Reinforcement EIS.

Ore. — To reinforce electrical service to the southern Oregon coast and provide the necessary transmission for Nucor Corp. to build a new steel mill in the Coos Bay/North Bend area. The Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Corps of Engineers are cooperating agencies. A draft EIS is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Telephone Flats Geothermal Project EIS (CalEnergy).

No. Calif. — A geothermal power plant and new transmission line have been proposed on Forest Service land in the Modoc Forest. BLM has the lead and BPA is a cooperating agency. The draft EIS and summary are available. Call to receive a copy.

Vegetation Management Program EIS.

Regionwide — To develop a vegetation management program while maintaining a safe and reliable transmission system. The draft EIS is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Programmatic EIS.

Wash. — The Bureau of Reclamation has the lead and BPA is a cooperating agency. The final programmatic EIS is available. Call Robert Black, BOR 303-445-2704 to receive a copy.

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Acronyms:

EA: Environmental Assessment

EIS: Environmental Impact Statement

FONSI: Finding of No Significant Impact

NOI: Notice of Intent

ROD: Record of Decision

Visit the BPA home page at <http://www.bpa.gov>.

An archive of past *Journals* is available on the Internet at

<http://www.bpa.gov/Corporate/KC/home/journal/>.

We welcome all comments from you at Journal-CKC, Bonneville Power Administration, P.O. Box 3621, Portland, OR 97208-3621 or enballa@bpa.gov.

For More Information or To Get Involved:

The *Journal* is a monthly newsletter of the Bonneville Power Administration for customers and interested publics.

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For questions/comments, call: 230-3478 (Portland) or 800-622-4519, or E-mail to comment@bpa.gov. Address comments to: P.O. Box 12999, Portland, OR 97212.

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